

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT O 01233 01 OF 02 212043Z

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 CIAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INR-05 PRS-01 L-01 PM-03 DODE-00 EB-03 /042 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7809

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT OF SPAIN 1233

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR TD US VE ECLA IBRD

SUBJECT: FAREWELL CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNOR GENERAL

SUMMARY: DURING MY LENGTHY AND VIRTUALLY UNPRECEDENTED
FAREWELL CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER, DR. ATLLIAMS
EMBARKED ON A WIDE RANGING DISCOURSE ON THE CARIBBEAN
AND TRINIDAD'S ROLE IN THE REGION. CASTING HIS VIEWS
IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, HE EXPRESSED STRONG
SUSPICIONS OF VENEZUELA'S REGIONAL AMBITIONS, TWITTED
US MILDLY FOR NOT AGREEING TO LET THE CARIBBEAN MAKE
ITS OWN MISTAKES IN SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS ECLA,
VOICED CONCERN OVER THE STIFF LOAN TERMS IMPOSED ON
TRINIDAD BY THE INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS,
AND WARMLY SPOKE OF THE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN
US-TRINIDADIAN RELATIONS. THIS IMPROVEMENT WAS IN
TURN DESCRIBED BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AS "UNBELIEVABLE."
END SUMMARY.

1. CONTRARY TO HIS USUAL PRACTICE OF NOT MAKING
HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO ARRIVING OR DEPARTING FOREIGN
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PAGE 02 PORT O 01233 01 OF 02 212043Z

DIPLOMATS, PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS GRACIOUSLY

INVITED ME TO HIS RESIDENCE MAY 18 IN RESPONSE TO MY REQUEST TO TAKE MY LEAVE OF HIM BEFORE MY DEPARTURE. IN AN UNPRECEDENTED ONE AND ONE-HALF HOUR RELAXED CONVERSATION HE WAS MOST CORDIAL AND CANDID.

2. WILLIAMS EXPRESSED A DEEP-SEATED SUSPICION OF VENEZUELA AND VENEZUELA'S PRETENSIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN. DIPPING INTO HISTORY AS HE OFTEN DID DURING OUR DISCUSSION, HE NOTED THAT VENEZUELA HAD NEVER REPUDIATED THE CLAIM IN ITS CONSTITUTION TO HOLD SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL TERRITORIES INCLUDED IN THE SPANISH ROYAL DECREE OF 1777, A DECREE WHICH GAVE THE CAPTAINCY GENERAL OF VENEZUELA JURISDICTION OVER TRINIDAD. MOREOVER, VENEZUELAN HISTORIANS CONTINUE TO ADHERE TO THIS INTERPRETATION. COMMENT: WILLIAMS' PERSONALLY HELD SUSPICIONS UNDOUBTEDLY MEAN WE WILL HEAR MORE FROM TRINIDAD ABOUT VENEZUELAN NEO-COLONIZATION OF THE CARIBBEAN, A THEME WHICH WILL COME INTO CONFLICT WITH MICHAEL MANLEY'S WARM EMBRACE OF VENEZUELA FROM JAMAICA EVER SINCE MANLEY HAILED FORMER VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTER CALVANI AS "THE ARCHITECT OF THE SPIRIT OF REGIONALISM IN THE CARIBBEAN."

3. WILLIAMS RANGED WIDELY OVER HISTORY, NOTING WRYLY THAT BOLIVAR HAD OFFERED PANAMA AND NICARAGUA TO THE UK AND IF THE LATTER HAD ACCEPTED THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES WOULD HAVE CONTROLLED ALL THE WORLD'S MAJOR SEA LANES, THUS ELIMINATING THE PANAMA CANAL PROBLEM. THIS WAS HIS ONLY REFERENCE TO THE CANAL, AND THAT ONLY IN PASSING.

4. DISCUSSING THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED ECLA CONFERENCE HERE IN PORT OF SPAIN, WILLIAMS WAS CRITICAL OF THE UK AND CANADA FOR THEIR BLAND ABSTENTIONS ON ISSUES ON TRANSPARENT GROUNDS SUCH AS NOT HAVING RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS. WITH REGARD TO THE USG OPPOSITION TO MANY OF THE CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS AND IN PARTICULAR TO HIS OWN PROPOSAL FOR A CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE WITHIN ECLA, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT O 01233 01 OF 02 212043Z

CLAIMING HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE US OPPOSITION (HE COULD OF COURSE), HE SUGGESTED THAT THE USG SHOULD NOT INSIST ON PARTICIPATION BUT SHOULD LET THE CARIBBEAN TAKE CARE OF ITSELF AND MAKE ITS OWN MISTAKES, MISTAKES FOR WHICH THE CARIBBEAN WOULD THEN BE RESPONSIBLE AND NOT THE US. THIS WAS HIS ONLY CRITICISM OF US AND IT WAS MILDLY COUCHED IN THE CONTEXT OF A FRIENDLY DIFFERENCE IN PRESENT PERSPECTIVE.

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS, ONE OF WILLIAMS' FREQUENT PUBLIC THEMES RECENTLY, WERE NOT ONCE MENTIONED.

5. WE TALKED BRIEFLY OF THE SMALLER ISLANDS, GRENADA AND THE ASSOCIATED STATES. DR. WILLIAMS STATED FRANKLY THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE SOLUTION COULD BE FOR THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HE WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THEIR FUTURE, BUT FELT THAT THEY MUST INEVITABLE BAND TOGETHER IF ONLY IN ORDER TO LOWER ADMINISTRATION COSTS.

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PAGE 01 PORT O 01233 02 OF 02 212050Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT OF SPAIN 1233

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6. TURNING TO TRINIDAD'S DEVELOPMENT, HE MENTIONED THE IDB CONFERENCE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN SANTO DOMINGO AND COMPLAINED OF THE STRINGENT LOAN TERMS WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS HAD LEVIED ON TRINIDAD IN THE PAST YEAR, SUCH AS REQUIRING THE GOTT TO OFFSET ANY LOAN OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT WITH BOND PURCHASES. HE HAS REFERRED TO THIS SITUATION SEVERAL TIMES PUBLICLY RECENTLY, INCLUDING IN HIS CLOSING ECLA CONFERENCE ADDRESS, AND IT OBVIOUSLY RANKLED THAT THESE AGENCIES WERE SUDDENLY TREATING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AS A WEALTHY OIL EXPORTER. WHILE

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE GOTT HAS SOMEWHAT MORE FUNDS AT ITS DISPOSAL, THE PM STRESSED TO ME THAT TRINIDAD IS NOT IN THE BIG TIME OIL CATEGORY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ARE STILL ACUTE.

7. THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO ATTEND THE FORMAL DINNER BEING GIVEN IN MY BEHALF AS A SPECIAL GESTURE MAY 21 BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL, BUT THAT SINCE MOST OF THE GOTT CABINET IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY ON VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND
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PAGE 02 PORT O 01233 02 OF 02 212050Z

TRIPS, THE GG HAD HAD TO INCLUDE A NUMBER OF OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON THE GUEST LIST. THE PM NOTEDD THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN MET SOME OF THE OTHER AMBASSADORS WHO WOULD BE ATTENDING AND COULD NOT PLACE HIMSELF IN A POSITION WHERE HE WOULD BE OBLIGATED TO ATTEND FUNCTIONS FOR OR BY THEM.

8. INTERESTINGLY, WILLIAMS WAS AWARE THAT CINCINNATI, UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO, HAD HAD A SYSTEM OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN ITS CITY ELECTIONS. HE ASKED ME TO OBTAIN FOR HIM FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SYSTEM AND HOW IT HAD FUNCTIONED. I WILL DO SO AFTER RETURNING TO CINCINNATI. COMMENT: IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE PM IS STILL INQUIRING INTO SYSTEMS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AFTER HE HAS SO SOUNDLY CASTIGATED THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION PROPOSAL FOR TRINIDAD AND DECLARED FLATLY THAT NO PROPORTIONAL SCHEME WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE FOR TRINIDAD.

9. BEFORE DEPARTING, I INFORMED THE PM THAT THE US MARINE WHO DIED ON KOH TANG ISLAND IN THE RECENT ACTION TO RECOVER THE MAYAGUEZ WAS TRINIDADIAN AND THAT I HAD JUST VISITED THE FAMILY THAT VERY MORNING.

10. MY FAREWELL CALL ON GOVERNOR GENERAL SIR ELLIS CLARKE MAY 20 WAS LARGELY NON-SUBSTANTIVE, BUT SIR ELLIS WAS MOST WARM IN HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN US-TRINIDADIAN RELATIONS IN THE PAST SIXTEEN MONTHS. HE CHARACTERIZED THE PROGRESS AS "UNBELIEVABLE." NATURALLY THIS WAS GRATIFYING TO HEAR, AND I ASSURED HIM THAT MY SUCCESSOR WOULD HOPE TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND ON THE CONTACTS AND DIALOGUE WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO COMMENCE.

11. WHILE I WOULD NOT WISH TO PRESUME TOO MUCH FROM THESE EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP, AND WE STILL HAVE

A VERY DIFFICULT TIME EFFECTIVELY MAKING REPRESENTATIONS
OR INSTITUTING ANY DIALOGUE ON SOME SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES,
A MORE OPEN AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE WITH THE PRIME
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PAGE 03 PORT O 01233 02 OF 02 212050Z

MINISTER AND THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE GOVERNMENT
HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. LET US HOPE IT IS NOT EPHEMERAL,
BUT CAN BE SLOWLY EXPANDED INTO A MORE CONFIDENT
EXCHANGE OF VIEWS THAT SHOULD BE NORMAL BETWEEN TWO
NATIONS WITH SUCH BASICALLY SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS
AND COMMITMENTS TO DEMOCRACY AS OUR OWN.
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